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more noble than any other nation, never deign to marry the Spanish captives, much less to have any clandestine intercourse with them: so that their virtue would be safer in captivity amongst the savages, than in freedom amongst their own countrymen, could they escape the seductive arts of their fellow captives. In confession, I found most of the female Spaniards, after a very long captivity amongst the Abipones, guilty of no trespass upon the laws of chastity. They all agreed in confessing that no woman need go astray amongst these savages, unless she herself chose it. I can say as much for the continence of the young men, who had been long captives amongst them.

The gentle reader will pardon this digression concerning captives, if indeed it be a digression, because it does much towards establishing a good opinion of the chastity and benevolence of the Abipones, which form the subject of the present chapter, and will be further confirmed by additional arguments. They hospitably entertain Spaniards of the lower order, Negroes or Christian Indians, who have run away from their masters, lost their way, or, by some other means, chanced to enter the hordes of the Abipones, and, in the most friendly manner, offer them food or any thing else they may stand in need of; this they do the more cordially the

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[574] [648] more liberally these strangers abuse the Spanish nation; but if they neglect this they are taken for spies, and undergo considerable danger. They diligently watched over the safety of us Jesuits, to whom was committed the management of the colonies. If they were aware of any danger impending over us from foreign foes, they acquainted us with it immediately, and were all intent upon warding it from us. In journies, when rivers were to be crossed, the horses got ready, sudden and secret attacks of the enemy to be avoided or repelled, it is incredible how anxiously they offered us their assistance. See! what mild, benevolent souls these [648] [674] savages possess! Though they used to rob and murder the Spaniards whilst they thought them their enemies, yet they never take anything from their own countrymen. Hence, as long as they are sober, and in possession of their senses, homicide and theft are almost unheard of amongst them. They are often and long absent from their homes, during which time they leave their little property without a guard, or even a door, exposed to the eyes and hands of all, with no apprehension of the loss of it, and on their return from a long journey, find every thing untouched. The doors, locks, bars, [674] chests, and guards with which Europeans defend their possessions from thieves, are things

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speedily come to avenge the death of their people and loss of their property. Hence, in order to tranquillize their minds, and devise some method to keep off the foe, their chief care is to prepare a public drinking-party, that sure quickener, as they think, of the wit and exciter of valour.

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acid more quickly. On the same account, the Indians and Paraguayrian Spaniards have their maize, which is intended for drink, chewed by old women; they will not intrust this office to the younger ones, who, they say, abound in bad humours. Could any person, aware of this circumstance, though of no very delicate stomach, swallow the beverage without nausea? Yet this filthy drink has more lovers amongst the Americans, than Helen had amongst the Greeks.

They always have many causes for celebrating a public drinking-party; the most frequent are, the gaining of a victory, an impending fight, funeral rites, festivities on the birth of a Cacique's son, the shaving of widowers or widows, the changing of a name, the proclamation of a lately appointed captain, the arrival of a guest of consideration, a wedding, and, what is most common, a council of war. If materials for preparing the liquor be at hand, occasion, and inclination for drinking, will never be wanting. As honey is always to be had, they are never, at any part of the year, in want of mead; but as it is seldom to be got in sufficient quantities, for the number of partakers, parties of this kind are generally of short duration. From December to April, when the woods abound with the ripe alfaroba, is the

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chief season for drinking. During these months they drink without pause or intermission. They join the night to the day, with scarce any interval for brief meals, or sleep: before they have slept themselves sober they stagger back to the party of drinkers. During all that time you scarce ever find them in possession of their senses; to live, with them, is to drink, and you would say that the more they drank the more thirsty they grew. To show that they do not tremble at the sight of blood, and that they take pleasure in wounds, they emulously prick their breast and arms, and not unfrequently their tongue, with crocodiles' bones, and the sharpest thorns. Disputes too are frequent among them concerning pre-eminence in valour, which produce confused clamours, fighting, wounds, and slaughter. "In that skirmish you basely turned your back on the enemy," one perhaps will say to the other; who, not choosing to endure the reproach, replies "What? What do you say?" till from words they proceed to blows, to arrows, and to spears, unless other persons interfere. It often happens that a contention between two implicates and incites them all, so that snatching up arms, and taking the part, some of one, some of the other, they furiously rush to attack and slay one another. This is no uncommon occurrence in drink-

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273 ing-parties, and is sometimes carried on for
574 many hours with much vociferation of the com-
578 batants, and no less effusion of blood.

157 Intoxication affects the Abipones in various
273 ways. Some laugh violently, merrier than hila-
rity itself; others seem oppressed with melan-
choly; others, inflated with the remembrance of
their mighty deeds, grow more threatening and
boastful than the Thraso of Terence, or the
Miles Gloriosus of Plautus. I knew a man, who,
whenever he was drunk, threatened to kill his
little son, and as he lay stretched upon the
ground, spoke in such loud and angry tones to
his wife, that he was heard throughout the
whole neighbourhood. There was one man,
who, when he was drunk, always requested to
be baptized, continually exclaiming, "Make
haste, Father, and wash my head!" though,
when sober, he never thought anything about
baptism. An Abipon, of no reputation amongst
his countrymen, entered our house furnished
with a bow and arrows, and demanded of me, in
a threatening tone, whether I did not think him
a captain, that is, a man distinguished for great
actions; alarmed at the fierce countenance of
the interrogator, and at the bundle of arrows
which he bore, I made him a fine panegyric by
way of reply, though he was a man universally